

BOOK REVIEWS

narrative. In so doing, they add an invaluable critical perspective to the “Indian problem” in the news.

Razack, Sherene; Malinda Smith and Sunera Thobani, eds. 2010. *States of Race: Critical Race Feminism for the 21st Century*. Toronto: Between the Lines. ISBN 978-1-897071-59-5. Paperback: 29.95 CAD. Pages: 228.

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Researchers and Academics of Colour for Equality/Equity (RACE) is a national network of Indigenous faculty and faculty of colour committed to anti-colonial and anti-racist feminist research and activism. This edited collection is drawn from scholars associated with this network and coincided with the aims of their tenth anniversary conference – “to draw attention to the ‘wilfull forgetting’ in the majority of Canadian and international studies scholarship, of racial thinking, race-making and racial imaginaries, which have long served the imperial and colonial designs of empires and states alike” (xvi).

States of Race examines the complications, nuances and political currency of critical race feminism. The editors’ introduction and the eight chapters argue that two dominant logics drive the focus of critical race feminism – neoliberalism’s attachment to an imagined individualism devoid of a racial, ethnic or gendered self and the collective imaginaries which “make clear that ‘outsider groups’ and the ‘barbarians’ are always shaped by racial and gendered markers” (xvii). This apparent contradiction is enormously productive in shaping the governance of individual freedom for some and the “social death” (90) of others.

Attending to this dual logic makes each chapter a compelling read and speaks to the ways in which justice in Canada (for some) is perpetually deferred. Another main strength of this collection is the urgent and intricate theorization of race, the role of gender, feminism and theories of whiteness. How does feminism and gender rights further racial supremacy? How does the intersection of gender and whiteness embolden racial hierarchies? What is accomplished when feminism is positioned as contrary to Indigenous nationalism? These questions tease out the theoretical intricacies of critical race theory, feminism and whiteness and their application to pressing political issues such as racism and equity policies in universities, the veiled Other, security delayed individuals, Indigenous feminism, on-going colonization, the War on Terror, capitalist globalism and forms of resistance.

The collection begins with a reflective piece by Patricia Monture, the renowned Mohawk lawyer, scholar and activist, who passed away in 2010. Here, she offers powerful insights into how scholars of colour can survive a hostile and unchanging academic world while noting survival is not a very lofty goal. As one of the founders of RACE, her concern builds on a previous statement that “equality is not a high standard in my way of thinking” (3). Her treatise on racial oppression in universities is followed by Malinda Smith’s chapter on how equity policies in academia have translated into equity policies for white women only. The “motivated ignorance” and “hegemonic whiteness” of academic feminism means justice deferred for faculty of colour and Indigenous scholars (42, 49). Similar themes are developed in Gada Mahrouse’s chapter on “racial liberalism” in social justice movements, such as international solidarity projects and socially responsible tourism. Instead of examining the politics and histories of particular regions, western subjects perform a type of temporary solidarity that leaves their implication in colonial and imperial designs unquestioned. Mahrouse argues that privileged students in these programs are further empowered and feelings of “innocence, redemption and benevolence” are secured (181). The theme of “justice deferred” is picked up again in Sherene Razack’s examination of security delayed individuals (refugees granted asylum but not full citizenship on the grounds they are deemed security risks) pre-9/11. Razack details how individuals are left for years without full legal rights on the speculative grounds they *may* engage in terrorism. Drawing on Giorgio Agamben, Razack describes the security delay as a camp, where bureaucratic routines mask racial violence and make individual wrongdoing in institutions impossible to prove. Security delayed individuals have little recourse to information, process, and appeals - an arrangement that will only intensify with the passage of Bill C-31 in 2012, amending Canada’s refugee laws.

If we are witnessing a magnification of the colour line as the introduction suggests, the following three chapters illustrate its troubling intersection with gender, whiteness and varieties of feminism. Yasmin Jiwani explores the racial expression of gender in the representations of Muslim women and the hijab. Depictions of mistreated Muslim women “over there” service the war in Afghanistan, while assimilated women “over here” attempt to “diffuse...the threat of race” (74). She argues, like Thobani, that patriarchy and violence are portrayed as uniquely Islamic, while western gender inequality is uniquely absented. While many scholars lament the declining currency of feminism, Sunera Thobani details its steady rise after 9/11. Many white women actively filled the ranks of journalists, filmmakers, politicians and international development workers who would document gender oppression in Afghanistan. Thobani exposes how feminists depicted the US and Israel as the target of Muslims, legitimizing the invasion of Afghanistan and by extension making any critique of Israel as a new form of anti-Semitism. Judith Butler’s comments about the shared suffering and vulnerability in the world after 9/11 are read by Thobani as yet another example of centering the western subject as the only truly human subject. Feminists must attend to the racial inequities and

imperialist relations within the global economy and consider the political demands of Islamist movements before advocating simplistic calls for gender emancipation. Another layer of complexity to the possibilities and tensions between Indigenous feminism and Indigenous nationalist discourses is explored by Isabel Altamirano-Jimenez. She critiques the discourse of Indigeneity; a political category that paradoxically promotes and limits autonomy and she explores the tensions between gender struggles within Indigenous communities and the struggles for decolonization. Altamirano-Jimenez describes Indigenous women as agents “challenging male-only Indigenous leaderships, gender discrimination, and state intervention that reinforce women’s exclusion. Indigenous women are also defending territorial sovereignty, autonomy, human rights, control over natural resources, health and body, and traditionalism” (120).

A chapter that stands apart from the others in this volume is an exploration of the shifting expressions of race and whiteness in light of a globalized political economy. Sedef Arat-Koç asks if the same racial dynamics apply as the white working class suffers in a faltering economy while non-whites become part of a transnational bourgeoisie? Leaving gender aside in this chapter, Arat-Koç tracks how the racially coded underclass (including whites), the precarious racial status of Eastern Europeans, and non-white elites in a transnational economy reveal some cracks in the colour line, yet one that is still built on the notion of white supremacy as the norm. While openings or cracks in white dominance appear, Arat-Koç argues that new forms of racism and imperialism take hold where racialized people are deemed as disposable and anti-immigrant and anti-refugee laws surface. Unlike the rest of the collection, this work offers a deeper focus on material inequities and their shifting attachments to who is deemed “white.”

After reading through these chapters I am struck by each scholar’s commitment to justice and the careful theorizing required when attending to multiple axes of oppression. In some cases I would have preferred more substantive accounts or evidence to back up claims, and I wondered how insights from queer theory might produce a less flattened articulation of gender. At times neoliberalism (radical individualism) is portrayed in direct opposition to an innocent and noble welfare state, a distinction that does little to ensure a critique of both. Mostly, however, I am reminded of the many rewards of maintaining and reproducing a scholarship of dominance and how easily we are enticed into a wilfull forgetting of racial thinking and whiteness in the formation of neoliberal and imperial projects. This may come in many forms, such as the rejection of race in favour of class politics, the addition of “race” while keeping our analysis in place, the advocacy for racial justice while keeping categories of race static, whiteness studies scholarship that over applauds white scholars or is diluted of any emancipatory or disruptive potential, or claims in university departments that there is too much focus on race. We easily occlude and collude in our respective disciplines; this volume goes a long way in countering and de-stabilizing majority scholarship.